

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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AMCONSUL ISTANBUL

AMCONSUL IZMIR

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SUMMARY: AFTER MONTHS OF PARLIAMENTARY MANEUVERING, THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT HAS REMOVED ISMAIL CEM IPEKCI AS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF TURKISH RADIO AND TELEVISION (TRT), ONE OF THE MORE CONTROVERSIAL APPOINTMENTS OF THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT. IPEKCI'S STATUS HAS LONG BEEN A PARTISAN POLITICAL ISSUE BETWEEN THE NATIONALIST FRONT PARTIES AND THE OPPOSITION REPUBLICAN PEOPLE'S PARTY (RPP), AND HE REPORTEDLY INTENDS TO APPEAL HIS REMOVAL FROM OFFICE. END SUMMARY.

1. PRIMIN SULEYMAN DEMIREL, REPLYING TO JOURNALISTS' QUESTIONS ON MAY 12, WAS QUOTED AS SAYING THAT PRESIDENT KORUTURK HAS SIGNED THE DECREE REMOVING ISMAIL CEM IPEKCI AS DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE TRT. THE DECREE, WHICH HAS NOT RPT NOT YET BEEN PUBLISHED IN THE OFFICIAL GAZETTE, REPORTEDLY PROVIDES FOR IMEKCI'S REMOVAL UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE TRT LAW ON NATIONAL SECURITY GROUNDS. IPEKCI, ACCORDING TO THE PRESS ACCOUNTS, INTENDS TO APPEAL HIS REMOVAL TO THE COUNCIL OF STATE, THE HIGHEST ADMINISTRATIVE COURT. HOWEVER, ONLY IN THE EVENT THE COUNCIL SUSPENDS

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THE DECREE PENDING A FINAL VERDICT (WHICH COULD TAKE MONTHS),

WOULD IPEKCI CONTINUE IN OFFICE. OTHERWISE, HE IS OUT. THE MATTER OF HIS REPLACEMENT, HOWEVER, IS NOT YET SETTLED, WITH MOST OF THE PRESS REPORTING THAT THE DECREE APPOINTING PROFESSOR NEVZAT YALCINTAS AS THE NEW DIRECTOR GENERAL HAS NOT YET BEEN SIGNED. TRT DEPUTY DIRGEN DOGAN ERDEN REPORTEDLY WILL BECOME ACTING DIRECTOR IN THE INTERIM.

2. IPEKCI, A FORMER MILLIYET JOURNALIST CONSIDERED CLOSE TO RPP CHAIRMAN BULENT ECEVIT, HAS FOR SEVERAL MONTHS BEEN CRITICIZED BY THE NATIONALIST FRONT PARTIES FOR ALLEGEDLY FAVORING THE RPP AND LEFTIST CAUSES IN TRT NEWS COVERAGE AND PROGRAMMING. IN ITS GOVERNMENT PROGRAM, THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT PLEDGED TO REPLACE IPEKCI WITH SOMEONE WHO WOULD RESTORE "BALANCED COVERAGE AT TRT. THE NATIONALIST FRONT'S TACTICS HAD AT FIRST BEEN DIRECTED TOWARD HAVING THE PARLIAMENT REJECT DECREE LAW NO. 11, WHICH WAS PASSED BY THE ECEVIT GOVERNMENT, PERMITTING ECEVIT IN APPOINTING IPEKCI TO MAKE AN EXCEPTION TO THE QUALIFICATIONS REQUIRED BY LAW FOR A TRT DIRECTOR GENERAL. THE PARLIAMENT, HOWEVER, HAS NOT YET TAKEN FINAL ACTION ON THAT DECREE, AND IS EXPECTED TO CONTINUE DEBATE MAY 13. MEANWHILE, THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT PRESENTED A SEPARATE DECREE TO THE PRESIDENT PROVIDING FOR IPEKCI'S REMOVAL UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE TRT LAW AND THAT DECREE HAS NOW BEEN APPROVED.

3. THE IPEKCI CASE, WHICH HAS BEEN SOMETHING OF A SENSATION IN THE TURKISH PRESS, HAS BEEN A STRICTLY PARTISAN ISSUE BETWEEN THE NATIONALIST FRONT PARTIES AND THE RPP. A) ON MAY 2 DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER NECMETTIN ERBAKAN WAS QUOTED BY THE PRESS AS SAYING THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT RPT NOT ALLOW THE TRT TO BE THE "VOICE OF MOSCOW" AND THAT IPEKCI WOULD SOON BE REMOVED. (B) COMMENTING ON REPORTS THAT THE DECREE REMOVING IPEKCI HAD BEEN PRESENTED TO THE PRESIDENT, RPP LEADER ECEVIT SAID MAY 4 THAT IF IT WAS APPROVED, CONFIDENCE IN THE RULE OF LAW IN TURKEY WOULD BE SHAKEN AND A NEW CRISIS PRECIPATED. (C) ON MAY 5, MINISTER OF STATE SEYFI OZTURK DEFENDED THE GOVERNMENT'S ACTIONS AND CHARGED THAT ECEVIT, BY DEFENDING IPEKCI, DEMONSTRATED THAT HE SHARED THE SAME "IDEAS AND ACTIONS." (D) IN RESPONSE, IPEKCI REQUESTED THAT THE ANKARA STATE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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SECURITY COURT INVESTIGATE THE CHARGES AGAINST HIM UNDER ARTICLE 9, PRESUMABLY IN THE BELIEF THE CHARGES WOULD PROVE GROUNDLESS.

4. COMMENT: IN A COUNTRY WHERE THE CREDIBILITY OF THE STATE BROADCASTING CORPORATION IS CONSIDERABLY HIGHER THAN THAT OF THE PRESS (AND WHERE 55 PERCENT OF THE POPULATION IS ILLITERATE), HE DIRECTOR GENERAL OF TRT CAN POTENTIALLY

EXERCISE STRONG INFLUENCE OVER PUBLIC OPINION. FURTHERMORE,  
THERE IS LITTLE DOUBT THAT IPEKCI AND THE GROUP OF  
ASSISTANTS HE BROUGHT IN WITH HIM--WHILE THEY HAV INJECTED  
SOME NEW IDEAS INT TURKISH BROADCASTING--ARE PRO-RPP AND  
THEIR POLITICAL BELIEFS HAVE INFLUENCED TRT'S COVERAGE OF THE  
NEWS. WHILE HIS REMOVAL IS A VOCTORY FOR THE NATIONALIST  
FRONT, THE PROSPECT OF CONTINUED ACTION IN THE TURKISH COURTS  
(WHICH IPEKCI'S FOLLOWERS TOLD US COULD AT BEST RESULT ONLY  
IN HIS BEING AWARDED COMPENSATION BUT NOT IN HIS REIN-  
STATEMENT) SUGGESTS THAT THIS CASE WILL CONTINUE TO BE A POLITICAL  
ISSUE BETWEEN THE DEMIREL GOVERNMENT AND THE RPP.  
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